

Interview Index

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Interviewee: Sister Mary Schneider

Interviewer: Shannon Green, Director, CSJ Institute, Mount Saint Mary's University; Kelby Thwaites, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Mary Trunk, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Nakorn Chaisri, Camera Operator, Mount Saint Mary's University, Film and Television.

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Transcribed By: Nancy Steinmann

[00:00:00.00] [Director's comments].

[00:00:16.22] SHANNON GREEN: Today is Tuesday, April 10, 2018. This is Shannon Green, Mount Saint Mary's University at Carondelet Center for the CSJ Oral History Project interviewing Sister Mary Schneider, with Mary Trunk, Kelby Thwaites and Nakorn [Chaisri] from Film and Television department.

[00:00:38.04] SHANNON GREEN: Okay, Sister Mary, if you would get us started--would you share your full name and your age?

[00:00:46.10] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: My name is Sister Mary Schneider and I'm seventy-five.

[00:00:50.15] SHANNON GREEN: And would you tell us just a little bit about where you were born and your family--a little bit about your childhood?

[00:00:00.00] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I was born in San Francisco, California. I went to Star of the Sea--no, first I went to public school, when I was--kindergarten through second grade. And then I went to Star of the Sea, and that's where I met the Sisters [of St. Joseph of Carondelet (CSJs)]. Graduated from Star of the Sea grammar school and went into Star of the Sea high school. Graduated from there and entered the community.

[00:01:22.23] SHANNON GREEN: And what did your parents do for a living?

[00:01:25.16] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Well, my dad died when I was seven, so my mom--he was in the Postal Service, but he died when I was seven--six. And my mother then had to go to work and she worked at Sears Roebuck.

[00:01:39.06] SHANNON GREEN: Did you have siblings? Do you have [unintelligible]?

[00:01:41.06] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I have two sisters. I have an older sister, seven years older, and a younger sister, five years younger.

[00:01:46.21] SHANNON GREEN: And were you a very religious, Catholic, practicing family?

[00:01:49.22] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I would say so. Yes. If I was sick on Sunday and didn't go to church, couldn't go out and play. [all laugh]. Yes, that was one of the rules.

[00:02:03.07] SHANNON GREEN: And when would you say you first started to think about religious life as an option for you?

[00:02:08.12] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I think I was in sixth grade when I knew I wanted to be a Sister. But it was interesting, because even though I knew I wanted to be a Sister, I also wanted to have the full life of a teenager and whatever--you know, dances and boyfriends and all of that, which I had. But I also knew I wanted to enter. And I did enter right after I graduated.

[00:02:30.16] SHANNON GREEN: And what do you think--was there anything about the Sisters of St. Joseph-

-did you know other communities of Sisters?

[00:02:36.10] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: No.

[00:02:37.01] SHANNON GREEN: You just knew the CSJs?

[00:02:38.07] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Right. In high school, the grade school teachers often needed people to help them--like bulletin boards and stuff like that. So, that's how I really got to know the Sisters, because I'd spend time with them, putting up bulletin boards or separating their papers or whatever they wanted done. I think the thing that drew me to the Sisters was--I don't know--there was a joyfulness about them. They kind of like, liked each other, and they enjoyed each other and they were good to us. So, that was a drawing card for me.

[00:03:14.07] SHANNON GREEN: And when you think about wanting to be a Sister, was it about being a Sister, was it about being a teacher, was there a kind of an image you had of yourself for the future?

[00:03:25.23] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I think I thought of myself as a teacher. I mean, they--our Sisters--were teachers. So, that's all I knew. I mean, I didn't even know we were into the nursing or anything like that. But I used to teach CCD [Confraternity of Christian Doctrine] classes when I was a kid. And then, I just--I thought I would be a teacher. That was it. I didn't know what was religious life. Did I know what that was at seventeen? No. [all laugh]. I did not have the slightest idea.

[00:03:52.21] SHANNON GREEN: And how did your mother feel about you entering?

[00:03:56.01] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: As long as I wasn't going to be a missionary, I could go. [laughs]. But if I was going to go to another country, I couldn't go. That's what she said.

[00:04:05.16] SHANNON GREEN: And did you--did a number of your classmates enter with you as well?

[00:04:10.09] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yes. There were a number of us--from Star.

[00:04:12.13] SHANNON GREEN: Yeah. And do you remember--actually, let me ask you--do you remember any of the Sisters--like, did you want to name any of the Sisters who were particularly influential in your high school years, any favorite teachers, or Sisters who encouraged your vocation?

[00:04:28.06] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Not sure I even remember--I'm not sure I even remember their names. Michaeline [Sister Michaeline Gahwolf (1923-2016)??] was one of them--she was a science teacher, and she was young. The other Sisters were older, so, I mean, you would be attracted to the younger person--the younger Sister. I don't know that it was the high school Sisters that influenced me--it was more the grade school Sisters that I worked with or that, you know, had me helping them and stuff like that. The high school ones, not so much. [all laugh].

[00:04:58.11] SHANNON GREEN: Do you remember--we just interviewed Sister Ann Patricia [O'Connor], who talked about taking the train from San Francisco to LA to enter. Do you remember--just those days--of the early days, when you became a postulant and did you take the train, or did your family bring you to LA?

[00:05:15.24] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: No, we took the train. Those of us who entered took the train, and we were met I think by Sister William [Marie Brong, aka Sister Carol Brong??] and--I don't know--toured us around the city and that was the end of it. I think--no, I did not take the train. I think we flew. I think we flew down. I'm not really sure. It could have been flying or it could have been train. But I remember that somehow, I got a chain letter that day--somehow, I don't know how it got into my possession. And I was very upset about that, because it seemed like, here I was going to go do something and this chain letter seemed like a bad omen for me. But nothing happened--no bad omens [all laugh].

[00:05:54.23] SHANNON GREEN: Was it a difficult transition for you when you entered?

[00:06:00.20] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: No. It was easy. I mean, for me it was easy. The fact that I was--I

had two sisters--but the fact that there were so many people--I mean, we had a lot of friends, put it that way. It was--we were all in the same--I don't know--we were all having the same difficulty or whatever. It was easy for me.

[00:06:20.12] SHANNON GREEN: And the structured life--the charges--

[00:06:24.14] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I kind of liked all that. It was easy for me. The one thing I remember so clearly--I think about this when I go up and down the stairs. At Christmas time, they--the older Sisters--the novices, I guess--we were postulants--the novices decorated all the railings with like, I don't know, ribbon and greenery and it was beautiful. So, when we got up to go to midnight Mass, we went down those stairs and it was like, "Wow!". I mean, I had never had anything like this in my life. So, I think--I think coming to community was like--much more than I could have ever had in my own life, in terms of celebrations and that kind of thing, decorations, you know--ritual, all of that. That was neat for me--I liked it.

[00:07:14.17] SHANNON GREEN: That's great. And then, what were you--what was it--did you always think you would go to college, whether or not you were going to become a Sister? Was that always kind of part of your plan?

[00:07:24.11] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: No. I never--my sister never went to college. She worked and you know, that was it. I don't know what would have happened. I mean, never thought about it past high school. I don't think I would have gone to college had I not entered.

[00:07:35.05] SHANNON GREEN: Okay. So, what was it--do you remember about your college classes as a young Sister? Did you like being in college or was it--

[00:07:43.15] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Well, here we were a bunch of us, up at the college, couldn't talk to any of the girls, couldn't have any conversation. It wasn't like going to college. I mean--[laughs]--it was not like going to college. So, I think we had special classes, and they--you know, like, Theology classes and they counted that for other things that we did.

[00:08:04.24] SHANNON GREEN: But in terms of studying, did you enjoy the educational formation?

[00:08:10.27] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yes and no. [laughs]. Yes and no. I liked it when I was--I guess I was a junior, when we were able to make some selection of the classes that we had. I got into Art and that was very good for me. That was hands on--that's something I really wanted to do. The other was not so interesting to me.

[00:08:33.14] SHANNON GREEN: What kind of Art did you start with?

[00:08:36.21] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I think we started with--I did intaglio printing, I did ceramics, I did painting.

[00:08:43.18] SHANNON GREEN: And did you know--had you been interested in the arts since you were a child, or?

[00:08:48.22] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yes, since I was a kid. I remember when I was first going up to the college and they said--I said--or they said, "What would you like to take?" or I don't know. I said, "I'd like to take Art." And she said, "Are you any good at it?" And I go, "Well, I don't know." And she said, "Well, if you don't know, the answer is 'No'." So, I got a "No" answer, but then, like I said, once I went toward my credential, then I could choose all the classes that I wanted, and I took them all in Art. [smiles]

[00:09:14.18] SHANNON GREEN: Was there--was Sister Ignatia [Sister Mary Ignatia Cordis (1886-1986)] on the--at the--

[00:09:18.11] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: She was, but she was never one of my instructors.

[00:09:21.02] SHANNON GREEN: Did you have other Sister faculty at the Mount?

[00:09:23.14] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: No.

[00:09:25.01] SHANNON GREEN: Okay. Did your--was your family able to visit you while you were in formation?

[00:09:34.14] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I guess--no, I don't think so. I think they might have come down just for Reception or--because San Francisco--they probably wouldn't have come.

[00:09:44.20] SHANNON GREEN: Do you remember your Reception, or receiving the habit, or?

[00:09:49.06] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Oh yes.

[00:09:49.17] SHANNON GREEN: Yeah, what kind of memories do you have of those days?

[00:09:51.13] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Well, the white dress. Then the change. And I remember the Sister who dressed me--her name was Sister Mary Martha [??]. I didn't really even know her, but she dressed me, cut my hair and all this kind of stuff. And--yeah, you--[makes cutting motion]. [laughs]. And then we marched back down as--you know, in habit. It was kind of different. And then we were told we couldn't get our pictures taken, of course. And so, if anyone was trying to take our pictures, we were always hiding, ducking, you know, because we didn't want to be in trouble. [all laugh].

[00:10:22.21] SHANNON GREEN: Did you receive a religious name?

[00:10:25.12] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yes.

[00:10:25.08] SHANNON GREEN: Would you mind sharing that?

[00:10:26.21] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Francis Therese. I don't know--Therese was my mother's name--middle name--but I don't know where I got the Francis. My mother wanted something like "Charles Fredrick" or something like that--"Charles" was my step-dad and then "Fredrick" was my real father. And I said, "Oh, no--I can't have Charles Fredrick--that's awful." [laughs]. So, I don't know how I got Francis Therese but--as soon as I could get rid of it, I was happy. "Mary" is much easier. [all laugh]. Much easier.

[00:10:55.26] SHANNON GREEN: You spent the first part of your ministerial life in elementary education--

[00:11:01.26] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yes.

[00:11:02.24] SHANNON GREEN: --and do you remember what your first experience in the classroom was like? Did you feel prepared? Did you enjoy it?

[00:11:11.07] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Well, we had--we did some practice teaching. I did first grade practice teaching at St. Vincent's and that was a disaster. I mean, that was not where I belonged. And then I did fourth grade practice teaching down at [St.] Martin of Tours. And that Sister--I forget her name now--she's dead, but I forget her name--she was really good, and she helped me. I mean, she taught me how to teach. So, when I went out as a junior, they needed someone to go out to Maria Goretti [School, Long Beach, California]. And so, I went out as a junior. Now, the people who usually went out were the ones who were going to be leaving. Well, I was going to show them that I was not going to be the one to leave. So, I went out and I taught sixth grade. And they had had a substitute teacher that whole year. And when I got in there, there were spit wads on the ceiling--I mean, they were absolutely horrible. So, me, knowing nothing, went in like Hitler. And it was great--I mean, they loved it, because I--it was organized. You know, we had Art, we had fun stuff, but I was tough on them. And that was my first--my very first teaching. And then I went to St. John's in Hyde Park [Los Angeles]. And I also taught a sixth grade down there. So, I always in--after that fourth grade--first grade, fourth grade--it was always sixth, seventh, or eighth grade. I would fit in there perfectly.

[00:12:35.08] SHANNON GREEN: That was the age group for you.

[00:12:36.09] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yeah. Not anymore--not anymore--

[00:12:38.28] SHANNON GREEN: No.

[00:12:39.06] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: --but now--then, yes, it was perfect.

[00:12:41.01] SHANNON GREEN: Do you remember--what was it, like, about that age group that you liked, or that you felt you connected with?

[00:12:47.15] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Probably that I could talk to them, they could understand me, they could follow directions, they--I mean, they were enthusiastic, that kind of thing. I remember creating--this was an interesting memory. I remember creating a bulletin board, and it was--it had a priest on it. Now, at St. John's, we had children who were white and also black. But this was my first experience of really working with African-American children. So, anyhow, I made this bulletin board, and I remember the priest--I made him black. And I put a black circle--however--whatever I did. And I remember the other sixth grade teacher came in and was absolutely horrified that I had created a black priest. And I, "What is this all about?", you know. So, that was my--one of my first experiences with multi-cultural kind of thing and discrimination, you might say.

[00:13:42.10] SHANNON GREEN: So, did you get to work in different kinds of communities and neighborhoods as a teacher, or??

[00:13:49.09] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yes, I was in a variety of places--Pleasant Hill [California].

[00:13:56.01] SHANNON GREEN: Oh, you were in Pleasant Hill too. Christ the King?

[00:13:58.00] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Concord, Christ the King. And those places I also--besides sixth, seventh and eighth grade, I probably taught Math in those classes. I also did things like yearbook, student council, all that kind of stuff.

[00:14:12.14] SHANNON GREEN: So, in those years in the late Sixties and early Seventies--and Vatican II [Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)] has happened--what do you remember about your experience of the changes that kind of unfolded at that time--how that impacted you as a religious?

[00:14:27.14] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I don't know that it--I think I--I think it was, like, happening so that I didn't know that it was really that big of a change. Does that make sense? I mean, I don't know that it impacted me, because maybe that's where I was moving anyhow. I'm not sure.

[00:14:47.27] SHANNON GREEN: So, in terms of when it came time to either try a modified habit or those kinds of things--

[00:14:54.22] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Oh. That was easy for me. [laughs]. I mean, I was teaching PE [physical education]--in a modified habit. You know, well, come on. Then they were worried that if I was teaching PE I would be taking off my veil. This was a big concern of everybody's. Come on. I mean--no, I was happy. As soon as we could change habits. However, I have to say that one year I was working in the desert in Arizona on a summer--I used to do different things every summer--but I was at a home for unwed mothers. And one of our girls had given birth, and I went to visit her. And I was in the elevator, and it was Arizona, I was in shorts and just regular clothes. And I remember somebody was kind of distressed. And I wanted to go up and say something to that person and I couldn't. And the reason I couldn't was because I wasn't dressed like a nun. And so, it was after that summer experience, when I came home, I said, "That's it--veil's going, everything's going. This is ridiculous." Wearing what--wearing clothes is not what makes me a Sister of St. Joseph. And so, I got rid of the veil and I started just being myself--[laughs]--a Sister. [all laugh].

[00:16:07.07] SHANNON GREEN: That's an interesting kind of--because it is an identity--

[00:16:11.13] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Of course, it was.

[00:16:11.22] SHANNON GREEN: --marker. Yeah. That's interesting to hear that--certainly externally, that's how people identify nuns--but for your yourself it was also how you identified. So, can you name some of those other things that then becomes the marker for you of what it means to be a Sister, if it's not--you know, if it's not the habit?

[00:16:30.29] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Oh, I think it's how you are with people. I think it's--for me, it's like reaching out to people, or listening, or being present to them. I don't know--being willing to step in, to help, to--it's not the habit, at all. It's who and how I am.

[00:16:55.18] SHANNON GREEN: Things like the changes in the liturgy--were those welcome to you? You wanted--

[00:17:01.07] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Oh, for me yes, because I could--after I studied dance, the first thing I did was to move into--do it in liturgy or--that was so exciting for me, that I could finally do something--I could add some femininity to liturgy and some beauty--yeah, that was good.

[00:17:21.15] SHANNON GREEN: So, let's talk a little bit about your transition out of elementary school and into the Creative Movement. How did that come about in you internally, or how did you know there was an opportunity? Can you just share what that part of your journey was like?

[00:17:39.06] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: We had a Sister Rachel Fitzgerald, who had studied with Barbara Mettler [(1907-2002), American dancer] in the Tucson Creative Dance Center. And she came back all--she was there for years--she came back all excited and she had, like, a workshop. And I went to this workshop--paid and went to this workshop--that's important. And I remember something she would say. She'd say, "Now close your eyes and do whatever." And I'm thinking, "Oh, no, I can't do this. What--I can't do this." And I remember saying to my friend, "This is it--I think I'm going home. I'm not going to stay." And she said, "You paid your money--you're going to stay." And I said, "Okay, I'm going to stay." So, the beginning was really hard for me, because, I mean, I wasn't--I guess I wasn't in tune with my body and I sure wasn't in tune with movement and all of this. But it was through Rachel--through that workshop--and then continuously she had, like, week--every Sunday we would meet together and dance. And then I studied with Barbara Mettler and I studied, you know, periodically. But I think as a child I always wanted to dance, but we couldn't--we didn't have the money to do the dancing. So, what--I think what happened for me was to see that dance became an art form for me. And so, I didn't need pencils and paper and paint and all that kind of stuff. And so, my art got transferred into dance as an art. And when I first did it, I was still teaching. I mean, there was--I don't remember what the dates were--I know I started teaching Creative Movement in about '83. But prior to that, I was still teaching, doing like summer studies or winter study and that kind of stuff. And then, I was down here at Visitation, and I was in a school. And at that time, I had asked the principal if I could do some Creative Movement with the kids, and she said yes I could. So, it was like my attempt at trying. I had no lessons--I mean, I had to create my own lessons and do everything. And then, from there, what happened was I had a little stint of campus ministry at CSUN [California State University Northridge] and that did not last but six months. And so, there I was without a job. So, I went to principals and I--two principals--Catherine Marie Kreta [Sister Catherine Marie Kreta '61] was one of them, and [Sister] Regina McLaughlin was the other one at St. Jerome's. And I said, "Could I come to your school and just do Creative Movement? I want to try this out as a ministry." And they both said yes. And so, I began writing my lessons and began teaching, and from there I went from volunteering to seven schools in one week--and that happened for quite some time. And I had to create my own contracts--I mean, we--this wasn't anything we did, you know. So, I had to have my own contracts, figure out how I was going to--how they were going to pay me, what was---who knew what to pay me? I didn't know--they didn't know--nobody knew. So, that's how I started out.

[00:20:35.11] SHANNON GREEN: So, can you say more about--when you say you were creating your lesson plans, your curriculum and there--what was your vision for this? What did you see as the need that you were maybe responding to?

[00:20:49.25] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Oh, well, I think what I learned as I was doing my dancing with Barbara or with Rachel, whatever, was that each person is individual and movement is also individual. And

for one--this was a moment in my life when I could be myself and that was good enough. You know, that who I was and how I moved, this was the goal. So, my goal--what I saw was, I could bring to children a freedom and an identity with themselves that they could realize that they had a gift that nobody else had. And so, how they walked was different than the way somebody else walked and this was good. And the more [makes air quotes] "different" you could be the better it was. So, that's where I went. And so, I guess the freedom that I experienced is the freedom that I wanted to bring to children. And children are free, anyhow, so you just don't--you know, you just have to encourage it. It's not hard to get it from them.

[00:21:55.22] SHANNON GREEN: And is there any kind of reflection in terms of your own spiritual life or your relationship with God that is part of this, in terms of the Creative Movement? You talked about like, part of liturgy--

[00:22:08.11] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: And dance, yeah. It's always interesting to me, because when they ask me to dance--whatever it is--I don't even see anybody. I don't even know that there's this whole congregation out there. It's something--Barbara Mettler's work was always, like, from within. It isn't something that like a dancer, you know, like a ballerina, you know, from the outside. But the dance comes from within. So, for me, any--how would I say? My relationship with God in terms of prayer--that is from within. And so, to have a means of expressing that in terms of movement is a power for me. That also happens to me in ceramics. I can do the same thing. Something within me can be expressed in another way. I have lots of--and photography--I can do--a lot of different ways that this creative spirit gets expressed--and therefore, my relationship with God or my relationship with other people gets expressed.

[00:23:11.28] SHANNON GREEN: How did the community respond to this emerging ministry that you were proposing?

[00:23:18.19] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Well, they let me do it. [laughs]. No, at first, when I first asked to do it, there weren't even enough regular teachers to go around. So, they said to me, "This is not a good time." And then, when I asked again, they said, "Okay, see what you can do." So, by going out--and I got all these different principals to hire me, they said, "Okay." That's how it was.

[00:23:40.26] SHANNON GREEN: It sounds like it was kind of at that time when people were exploring--

[00:23:44.02] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yes, the public school was taking away all of that kind of stuff, and the Catholic schools that I went to were adding it. And that's how it happened.

[00:23:52.23] SHANNON GREEN: Wow, that's interesting.

[00:23:54.08] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yeah.

[00:23:55.19] SHANNON GREEN: Yeah, I'm trying to--I'd love to hear more about--so you have this in the schools and--to me, I'd think about this for--opportunity for children and it could be very therapeutic, or healing. Is there kind of a healing component to--do you imagine it that way or?

[00:24:15.26] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I would think so--no, I would think so, yes.

[00:24:18.28] SHANNON GREEN: Does that--do you have any--do you have seen--can you describe how you might see that happen?

[00:24:22.24] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I'm thinking. Sometimes we use masks. I've made--my mother and I one year made all these different masks. Okay, so, a child puts on--we talk about that--when you put on a mask, that you die. You have to give up who you are and you have to let this new thing happen--this new creation come about. And I've been thinking of a child, let's say, who's very shy, who doesn't--you know, is not very good at expressing themselves. Put on that mask and all of a sudden--[throws up hands]--because they realize that this is--it's not "them" anymore, it's "them" some way else--being something else--doing movements that they had never even thought of creating before.

[00:25:12.20] SHANNON GREEN: How did your mother and you start to make masks? What--do you

remember?

[00:25:16.27] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Well, yeah, she came down to visit once--well, I had masks, but then we created them. And I just remember us doing this--was a lot of fun. And I always say to kids, "Now, my mother and I made these many years ago and I know they're falling apart. But, now she's in Heaven, and she's watching. She wants to see how well you use this mask." [all laugh]. So, a little bit of family comes in there.

[00:25:40.06] SHANNON GREEN: Do you remember--was your mother an artist also would you say--or did she?

[00:25:44.00] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: No.

[00:25:44.01] SHANNON GREEN: No. So, that wasn't part of your--

[00:25:46.23] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: No, she wasn't an artist.

[00:25:49.06] SHANNON GREEN: Yeah. Was this one of the masks that you brought, or is the mask that you brought--

[00:25:53.00] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: That is a mask I brought. That was the one--I made that mask after 9-1-1 [September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on World Trade Center, New York]. So, it's a powerful mask. It's not a--

[00:26:01.15] SHANNON GREEN: Would you mind telling us about it?

[00:26:03.03] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Sure.

[00:26:04.02] [Director's comments].

[00:26:18.02] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: [Shows mask]. Pretty ugly. [laughs]. Anyhow, this is--it says, "After the attack", "Terrorists", "Rebel Forces", "Alliance", "The Aftermath". And this was a mask that was made on my face, okay? So, this is me, but of course, I didn't want it to be me. I wanted it to be ugly and I wanted it to be--I don't know--scary in a way, but at the same time this was me. So, this was real powerful to do. And then, however, there was an inside. [Shows reverse side of mask.] So, in other words, there was like, yes, there's something that you see on the outside, but then on the inside of this mask is what you hope for--the playfulness, the--I don't--the simplicity kind of thing. But on the outside all this other stuff. I wrote a poem about it too. I have it over there.

[00:27:22.07] [Director's comments].

[00:28:09.04] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: It says--the poem that I wrote after writing this--"I am forever changed in a flash, ignited by hatred, speed, steel and fuel. I'm fearful of what is and what might be. I am wanting to hide, camouflage my identity, become invisible to other acts of terror, altering parts of myself as protection under an armature I shield myself even from my own feelings. I am warrior-like to others, but inside I long for the innocence of a child, full of dreams and playfulness. I am resistant to dealing with the reality of collective pain erupting out of silence. I am in awe of the image that came to birth through me, and offer it to others, to let it touch their soul. May it be a sacrament of peace."

[00:29:12.01] SHANNON GREEN: That's lovely.

[00:29:14.23] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: But, you know, the "armature"--that's--you know--when they put all that mask--stuff on you, that was like hiding behind that armature. And that was kind of powerful for me. So, where's--when I'm talking about dance, it's not so much a hiding as a "becoming"--this was more of a "hiding"--different.

[00:29:36.00] SHANNON GREEN: When did you start writing poetry?

[00:29:39.24] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I don't. [laughs].

[00:29:42.02] SHANNON GREEN: You did. [laughs].

[00:29:44.20] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I know--I don't.

[00:29:45.29] SHANNON GREEN: It's not a regular expression of yours?

[00:29:47.16] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: No. But it was in relation to that.

[00:29:51.08] SHANNON GREEN: I just was so struck by the last few words--the "sacrament of peace". Is there more you could say about that?

[00:30:00.10] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Well, I don't--do you remember 9/11?

[00:30:04.06] SHANNON GREEN: Yeah. Oh yeah, I was an adult.

[00:30:05.28] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: "A sign, a sacrament of peace". I guess--kind of for me, when you face the reality--when you face the terror--the reality--that then it can be a sign of peace. There can be something that shines through that becomes peace, as opposed to the ugliness or the terror or all those things. And maybe it's even--maybe it won't be on the outside--maybe it will only be on the inside, I don't know. But--I thought of it as a sign--a sacrament of peace. It hangs in my living room--[laughs]--with my other things.

[00:30:57.06] SHANNON GREEN: Thank you for sharing that. That's very powerful.

[00:31:00.04] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Thank you.

[00:31:02.07] SHANNON GREEN: So, how long were you able to work with children in schools, or do you still work with schools?

[00:31:06.26] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I'm still teaching. I still--I have two schools now that I'm still working at. And one is the one that I had in the very beginning. So, I've been there thirty-five years teaching Creative Movement and--to their grandparents maybe, who knows--or at least their parents. Yeah.

[00:31:25.00] SHANNON GREEN: That's remarkable. But it looks like you also then expanded that ministry to other populations? You started working with--certainly with the Sisters here--and other older adults, and--

[00:31:39.27] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Well, we used to have a group that met here. Every month we would meet and we would do it--instead of me dancing at liturgy, we had this group of Sisters. [Sister] Louise Bernstein was one of them, okay? [Sister] Kathleen Lamia, who's in a wheelchair upstairs--[Sister] Josepha [??]--[Sister] Carol Louise [??]--oh, I can't even name. But we used to meet once a month and I would have Movement with them and then we would dance for liturgies and things. But some of the Sisters didn't like it because some of them weren't dancers, and so, you know how that goes. But they loved it--I mean, they were happy with what they were doing and I thought it was great. But it wasn't quite the--I think people expected more of a [makes air quotes] "performance", you know what I mean, and we don't do "performance".

[00:32:28.19] SHANNON GREEN: What do you do?

[00:32:29.28] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: We pray. We do movement. We pray. That's part of--you know, it's an expression of our--of, I don't know--of relationship with God, or interpretation of a Psalm, or whatever. So, it might not be beautiful, but it's--comes from within folks.

[00:32:49.07] SHANNON GREEN: I know, like, for example, in this past--I think it was past Assembly, there was a special ritual and dance that had to do with the Vice Province from the--

[00:33:04.05] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yeah.

[00:33:04.09] SHANNON GREEN: Would you like, talk about that--how--using that maybe as an example, or other examples like that, where the dance ritualizes a significant event?

[00:33:13.20] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Well, that was interesting. [Sister] Theresa Kvale thought that we need--she was looking for some kind of symbol, because we were putting Hawaii and California together. And so she thought of-- Hawaiian's dance and she knew that I dance, and she thought that maybe if we put the two dances together that this would be a symbol of the coming together. So, the song that we used was a song that the Hawaiians often dance. I mean, they do it like all of them, you know what I mean, not just a dancer--they would all be doing that. And so, they sent me the words, or I found the words and then I created what I would do. So, what happened at the--what you saw was I think kind of what we did, although it was a different Sister that did it. But in Hawaii, the Hawaiian Sister did her thing, and I did my thing and on the chorus, that's when--she only came in on the chorus and I came in on the chorus, but I danced the rest of the verses, and she didn't do anything on that. But I think here, what you saw, the Sister also did the dances. But that was very interesting to me that the--that each of us could do our own thing, but that there was a unity in it. Someone said to me, "Where'd you learn to hula?" [laughs]. I said, "I never learned how to hula." But that's how they interpreted it, that somehow, I was doing what they were doing. Isn't that--for me that was interesting, because I wasn't--I was doing my own whatever, however I do it. But that was the--a symbol of the unity that we wanted to bring together. It thought it was--that I got to go to Hawaii--I got invited to go for this event--that was wonderful. [laughs].

[00:35:00.20] SHANNON GREEN: And with such a strong dance tradition in Hawaii too--

[00:35:05.15] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: No, it was great.

[00:35:07.05] SHANNON GREEN: That's good. Have there been other opportunities like that where you feel your ministry has marked a special moment for the community, or for the world, or?

[00:35:18.24] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Well, there have been a lot of different--I mean, yeah. There have been a lot of different things. Like, we've had--I mean, we've had various occasions and things that, you know--yeah. That's all I can say.

[00:35:32.22] SHANNON GREEN: Any of them stand out as memorable?

[00:35:35.14] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Well, Jubilees. Someone said this year, "How come you didn't dance?" And I said, "Because nobody asked for it, so." Nobody asked for it. If I was on a liturgy committee, then I would be planning it, but I'm not on the committee any longer. I think all of the liturgies that--like Jubilees and things like that--I love it when they ask me to incense the Sisters. To me, there's something very special about that, that I get to bless each of these women. That's kind of powerful. So, that I did this year, and I've been doing that for a number of years.

[00:36:09.00] SHANNON GREEN: Oh, that's a beautiful--

[00:36:10.26] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yeah, it is.

[00:36:12.12] SHANNON GREEN: Yeah. What is--what do you mean when you say you take our senior Sisters on "virtual vacations"?

[00:36:19.23] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Oh, well. That is something I'm very proud of--very, very proud of. Okay, I was doing Creative Movement in all these schools, but then I guess I had an afternoon free or something--[laughs]--and they grabbed me. And so, would I come up here and work? Okay, fine. So, I was doing something called "Windows on the World" and then I thought about--I was Director of Activities. Now, there was--not like it is now, come on. This is like--many years ago. But I said, "What do people do during vacation? They go somewhere--they go on vacation. Well, okay, let's go on a vacation." So, I had this wonderful person who worked with me in the Communications Office I think, and she did a lot of the footwork, but I did the brainwork. And the first vacation I took them to Hawaii. So, I have pictures you'll

have to see because it works in perfectly. But, I dressed up as a captain--I was the Captain of the ship. And they all came out to the sundeck and we sailed off. And then every day we went to a different place. And we had big screen TV at that time--no one had a big screen TV--but we had this big screen TV and I took them to different places. And we had different foods and we ate at different places in the building so that we could go to a different restaurant. They could come or not come. So, for a whole week we had this incredible vacation of Hawaii. At the end, we had a luau. And we even got a--free tickets for--to go to Hawaii--you know how we always have that drawing. Well, Hannon [??] gave us a free--for two--to go. And they--we said we wanted someone who had gone to this virtual vacation to go to Hawaii. So, they drew the ticket and it was me. So, I got to go to Hawaii with a friend. I took a friend from Minnesota and we went to Hawaii. So, that was the first one. The second one--the second year we went to the National Parks. And so, we had a tent outside, we--I mean, we made it look like vacation. Everybody--wheelchairs, everybody could come. That's what I loved about this--everybody was involved. And so, I was--I had borrowed from Camp Snoopy in Minnesota their uniform. They have a uniform that they wear. I asked, "Do you think you could lend me this?" You know, here's this person walking in--who are you and what is this about? They lent me their uniform, so every day I dressed in my uniform and I was like the person in charge. And so, we went to all these different places. And the third year, we went to--since we have so many workers up here from South and Central America, I took them on a tour of South and Central America. And we had each of the people--even if they couldn't speak English--they talked about their country and then we had someone translate it, and we had videos, and--you know. But that's what I did--I took them on these incredible--but the pictures are what you have to see, because--that's the important part. [laughs]. Let me show you.

[00:39:22.19] [Director's comments].

[00:39:46.14] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: [Shows photos]. [1] Here's the SS Independence. [laughs]. And there we are--we are--oh, and we did fishing off the boat. [laughs]. You know, it was so much fun because every single person got to do this. Okay? That's--okay. [2] And this was the luau--and that's when I won my prize. [laughs]. Okay--[unintelligible]. [3] The next one--here I am in Camp Snoopy outfit--in my Camp Snoopy outfit. The Sisters all wore, like, little pink hats so we knew--and they had passports--I mean we--and everyone--all this kind of stuff. [4] And there they were--here we were--the camper and our tent. All of these Sisters are dead now, except me. [laughs]. I'm still alive. [5] There they are--all of them who were on that vacation. You probably know some of them. That's it. That's it on those pictures.

[00:40:45.25] [Director's comments].

[00:40:54.02] SHANNON GREEN: [Looks at photos]. Wow. Oh, I like your uniform.

[00:41:00.20] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yeah, it was good huh?

[00:41:03.02] SHANNON GREEN: Yeah.

[00:41:03.15] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: And then I just brought it back the next year and returned it to them. I thought it was incredible that they just lent this to me. But what was so great--oh, this--you will probably laugh at this. I have a receipt--where is that receipt? [Shows receipt]. [6] I have a receipt from--I have to show you this. You know Paul, "King of the TV" [Paul [Goldenberg (1928-2015), "King of Big Screen TV"]]? You know, you've heard him--"The King"--"I am the King".

[00:41:39.20] SHANNON GREEN: Yes.

[00:41:40.00] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: So, I contacted "The King", and I asked "The King" if he would lend us a television. Now this was in '93. And so, here we are--here's my Paul's TV--lent me a TV, and that's how we were able to show these videos that people could actually see. And then, the Sisters said, "Oh yeah, we need a big TV now." You know, but they gave it to us--they lent it to us. It was incredible. This was what was so wonderful about the vacation. Oh, and then I had a friend who--on the--when we were on the camping trip, we would go out and we would cook breakfast out there. And then anyone who wanted to come out to the camping breakfast could come out and have camping breakfast with us. We did fun stuff, you know. [laughs]. Now they--they don't do any of that fun stuff. They take them places, but it's not the same. [laughs].

[00:42:30.12] SHANNON GREEN: You said it was something you're most proud of. And when you talk about it, you really--

[00:42:33.19] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Oh, no, that is--that is--I love that. And then after that, I decided that they needed a full-time Director of Activities, so I couldn't do this anymore, because I was doing other things. But that was really fun for me. That was great.

[00:42:48.01] SHANNON GREEN: Yeah. What's it mean to you to serve your Sisters in that way?

[00:42:50.20] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I loved doing that. I love--well, it's the same thing as with children--what can you do to bring more life--more life--provide life for the children or kids or for the adults. So, when I come I hope that's what I bring. I do exercise with them in Tai Chi. That's not the important thing. It's--you asked me before how, if it wasn't the habit that made you a nun, well, what is it? Well, I think it is how I am with folks, and I think that's what's important, not what I do with them. What I do is okay, but it's who I am with them. That's my "habit". [all laugh].

[00:43:34.01] SHANNON GREEN: Yeah, I'm looking at your--"Olympics"--is there anything you want to say about that?

[00:43:42.28] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Well, we did Olympics here too, but it wasn't as successful. I worked at a nursing home. And because I had access to Martin of Tours children, I chose children who I thought would work well with the adults, and we would create "Summer Olympics" or "Winter Olympics". And, I mean, we did crazy games. But then, you know, they got points and they won prizes and all this kind of stuff. But that was really a lot of fun to create an Olympics. It's just a one-day event, and then I did that many, many years at the nursing home--Vista del Sol.

[00:44:19.08] SHANNON GREEN: It seems like there's these themes of working with children and then working with seniors in some way. And you've already noted some of the similarities, I think, but just is there anything more you want to say about working with either of those populations?

[00:44:35.06] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Well, the seniors--in a way the seniors take a lot out of you and they don't have a lot of energy to give to you. They give you something else, but they don't give you the energy. The kids take a lot out of you and they give you back all the energy, right? So, the combination for me is a really good thing. I wouldn't want to be here full time. That would be hard. So, the fact that I'm here part-time and part-time with children, kind of that balances out the energies and the, you know--. What I learned for myself is--how I got into ceramics was, that I was doing everything creative for other people. And I needed something for me. And there was no dance, you know, for me to go to, to get from somebody else. So, somehow, I got into ceramics and that became my feed. You know, the ceramics feeds me whereas I create and--my stuff is in the shop and I sell it and stuff. But that is my creative day. I can--for me--day for me, not just for others.

[00:45:36.09] SHANNON GREEN: You said the seniors take something, you know, in terms of your energy--they don't give energy but they do something else. What's that something else that they give?

[00:45:49.17] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Acceptance--how about that? Affirmation, acceptance, appreciation for whatever you do for them--whatever small little things, big things. I don't know. They teach you how to age gracefully--some do that better than others. Yeah, no.

[00:46:14.07] SHANNON GREEN: You know, at the Mount we're focusing a lot on "wellness" in our Wellness Movement. I don't know if you've had the chance to hear about some of those efforts. But what have you learned, when you talk about, you know, working with seniors and working with the Sisters here and their aging--is there anything you would--insight you would or could offer our students or our Mount community in terms of practices of wellness that you think are beneficial, or what you've learned about aging--aging well?

[00:46:41.27] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I don't know if this is--Sharon Margaret [Sister Sharon Margaret [Ninteman??, CSJ Community Life Coordinator] will periodically say, "Okay, we haven't done anything about

walking--we haven't encouraged the Sisters to walk or do anything. Can you do something about it?" So, then I'll go and measure off all the distances and we'll put up, you know, and encourage them to do that walking and kind of stuff. I think--how would I say this? I kind of live my life that way, meaning I walk every day at least eleven thousand--or at least I get eleven thousand steps every day--I try. I do swimming, I do dancing. I--and I do whatever I can do with the Sisters for that same reason, you know, could--can I help you do something like--can we use the osteoball? Would that help you? And one Sister said, "I can now put my socks on." Where she couldn't put her socks on--she couldn't put her socks on. I don't know--I think to encourage people to continue to do whatever they can do is important. And what they've done here now, you know, they have--every morning they have an exercise program at nine-fifteen. I mean, it's only fifteen minutes, but boy those Sisters are down there and they're in their wheelchairs and they're doing whatever they can do. So, to be able to--find something that you like doing, enjoy doing that will also be beneficial to your health. My aunt used to say, "Get a good disease and then take care of yourself." I have diabetes. So, get a good disease and take care of yourself. So, that has helped me a whole lot with eating properly and exercise.

[00:48:29.16] SHANNON GREEN: Wow, that's great. Go back to my list of questions here. Could you share a little bit about the charism of the--in your experience of the charism--how you connect your work to the mission and the history? It helps us to hear Sisters talking about how the charism is alive in your life. Or if there is, like, one of the phrases or a bit of the language that speaks to you at this point in your religious life.

[00:48:59.27] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Those are the questions I don't know. [laughs].

[00:49:03.01] SHANNON GREEN: Okay.

[00:49:06.03] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Those are the hard questions.

[00:49:07.26] SHANNON GREEN: Yeah. Do you--I mean, does the Consensus Statement, like, resonate with you as a Sister?

[00:49:14.08] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Oh yes. One year [Sister] Kathleen Mary McCarthy--do you know her? She was a Provincial and she--they were having a province meeting--no, they were having a meeting of some kind. And she wanted me to dance the Consensus Statement. And I remember I was on retreat down--camping. And so, every day I am now trying to create a dance for the Consensus Statement. But I remember that very clearly. For her, that was really an important--for her. That was a very important statement. And then, to be able to dance it adds another whole dimension to it. So, I remember doing that. But--those are not questions that are easy for me. [all laugh]. So, ask me easy ones.

[[00:49:58.05] SHANNON GREEN: Have you been to Le Puy?

[00:49:59.01] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: No.

[00:49:59.16] SHANNON GREEN: No? Would you ever want to go?

[00:50:01.19] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I don't think so.

[00:50:02.26] SHANNON GREEN: It doesn't draw you in that way. Yeah, okay. Let's see--I'll look at some of my other questions.

[00:50:09.14] [Director's comments].

[00:50:16.07] KELBY THWAITS: So, you had mentioned the motto or the mantra from your aunt, to "get a good disease and take care of yourself." Have you had any ups and downs with diabetes? Because that can really lay people out. Are you able to manage it just with diet?

[00:50:33.23] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Diet.

[00:50:35.05] KELBY THWAITS: Insulin?

[00:50:35.09] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: No. No insulin.

[00:50:35.29] KELBY THWAITS: No insulin shots or anything like that?

[00:50:38.09] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: [Ned Forman??]. That's it.

[00:50:39.21] KELBY THWAITS: Wow. That's very impressive. That's fantastic.

[00:50:43.04] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yeah. I've had it since I've been in my twenties.

[00:50:45.12] KELBY THWAITS: Oh wow--

[00:50:45.04] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: --diabetes. So--.

[00:50:46.20] KELBY THWAITS: Yeah. So--just a good portion of your life.

[00:50:49.08] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: But I thought, "Get a good disease and take care of yourself."
[laughs].

[00:50:51.21] KELBY THWAITS: Yeah, that's a great motto. [all laugh]. I mean, it's a very memorable motto.

[00:50:56.03] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I know.

[00:50:56.14] KELBY THWAITS: And not expected.

[00:50:57.25] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I remember her saying that, clearly.

[00:51:06.24] [Director's comments].

[00:51:19.15] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I think, you know, for--well, I've always been active all my life. I've been like on sports teams and all of that, so, I just can't imagine a sitting down job or whatever. I'd have to be moving. But I do think it's important that people find something that they really enjoy doing so that they will do it--not so that they just go out--like, I have a friend that, you know, goes to the gym and then all of a sudden that's the end of it. You know, it has to be something that's motivating. So, when you do have a disease and exercise is important, then it becomes just a part of what you do. Like, I show up at the gym to swim all the time. Some people come once in a while. "How come you don't come all the time?" "Oh, well, I didn't feel like it." I said, "It has to be like brushing your teeth. You have to--you wouldn't ever think of not brushing your teeth, right? Well, you should never--you should have the same thing about exercise or whatever you do to keep well."

[00:52:16.01] SHANNON GREEN: And it sounds like you've seen that--I was very moved about you talking about the Sister being able to put on her socks, because it's such a small but not small--

[00:52:26.17] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: No.

[00:52:26.29] SHANNON GREEN: --kind of thing. And I bet you get to witness that kind of thing frequently. Yeah. That's very powerful.

[00:52:34.13] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: It is. I mean--.

[00:52:37.24] SHANNON GREEN: What would you say--as a member of this congregation--is there--you talked a little bit about what makes you most proud of some of the work that you've done. What about the community as a whole? What are you most proud of, of the CSJs?

[00:52:53.03] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I was just reading something in your magazine today. And I--and this is--really struck me--that this person--whatever it was about--she said that what was powerful for her

was that women were in positions of power. And I never had thought--I mean, I have thought about that in the past. And to think of our Sisters, like, building this building or building the college when there was nothing here, women who were not afraid to take risks and go for it. And that's what they did. And I still see us doing that in the same--in a different way, but--so, that's what I think--I'm most proud of leadership, that leadership leads and that they encourage us to be who we are. Now, I'm not a person, you know, doing big leadership things. But they've encouraged me in what I can do. And that's very important to me--to be who you are, to be how you are, you know, not something else--not wear your jacket. [all laugh].

[00:54:03.09] SHANNON GREEN: That's for Sister Regina Clare [Salazar].

[00:54:06.25] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Right. That's right.

[00:54:12.03] SHANNON GREEN: So, when you think about the future of religious life, which is in a big transition right now, do you have thoughts about that or anxieties about that or feelings about where the charism may go on or not go on, or--what are your reflections on the future?

[00:54:31.26] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I think it will go on, but in some other different kind of way. And it may not be us who carries it on--it may be you, may be other folks who carry it on--maybe children who I have taught. Who knows? I don't see it's something that you have to hang onto and say, "Oh my Gosh, we're going to lose something." Think of how it came about? And so, what else could come about. I think there's hope for the future.

[00:55:02.04] SHANNON GREEN: So, you don't seem to have worries.

[00:55:04.20] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: No. Well, no. And I'm not a young, young person, so I'm not worried about it. [laughs].

[00:55:11.16] SHANNON GREEN: There were some other objects that you brought. Is there--

[00:55:15.02] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Oh, I brought two pieces of ceramics, yeah.

[00:55:17.15] SHANNON GREEN: --that you made?

[00:55:18.06] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yeah.

[00:55:18.14] SHANNON GREEN: Oh, let's--can we take a look at those, too?

[00:55:20.17] [Director's comments].

[00:55:25.29] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I guess I just wanted you to see that it's--my work isn't just all fun and games--that there's some depth and some other kinds of things.

[00:55:32.22] SHANNON GREEN: Absolutely. So, tell us about--

[00:55:37.05] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Thank you. I had a friend--I had a friend, a Sister from Minnesota, St. Paul--a Sister of St. Joseph from St. Paul. And she was very sick and was dying. And so, like I said, ceramics and dance are--help me to express what is happening within me. [Shows ceramics]. [1] So, this a piece that I created while--when she was dying. And then this also--both of these--it's like a piece that goes together. Actually, there's a Pasqual candle and a flower that goes with it, but it was too little to bring. I guess--to dance something like this would be more difficult for me, although I guess I could do that, too. I could put into my body the feeling that I had in these statues. But then, to create it and to have it--I don't know--there's something about it that--this is spirituality to me. This is somehow God. Because even though there was death and emptiness, there was life. There was new life--on both of these, if you notice, there's a bird sitting on its nest and then there's this little bird right here. But the pain--I don't know if you can see pain and sorrow and agony--that's how it was for me. It was--

[00:57:11.27] SHANNON GREEN: This was for your--

[00:57:12.20] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: It was a relationship that was very, very special for me. Again, you asked me would I have ever gone to college if I wasn't a Sister, and I probably wouldn't have. If I wasn't a Sister and I hadn't have gone to this renewal program, I would not have met this Sister, and I would never have had a twenty-five-year relationship with her. It wasn't--just a special thing. She used to say that she thought of God as looking down and saying, "Oh, I've got something special for you, and here it is." And the two of us met each other. But then, to have the loss of that special person--well, it's worth it, you know. So, these were my special--me.

[00:58:02.02] SHANNON GREEN: Would you say those are you?

[00:58:05.01] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I think so.

[00:58:05.29] SHANNON GREEN: Yeah.

[00:58:06.18] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: They are me. They are me with the feelings of the emptiness and the loss.

[00:58:16.01] SHANNON GREEN: And the new life, as you say.

[00:58:22.12] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: And the new life. Yes--I mean, the belief that, you know, there is life. And I carry her love within me. It isn't like she's gone. She is gone, but not within me. She's within me.

[00:58:37.29] SHANNON GREEN: Do you want to share her name with us, or?

[00:58:40.10] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Oh, [Sister] Nora Mack.

[00:58:42.01] SHANNON GREEN: That's great. Is there anything else you brought that you want to share?

[00:58:50.01] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I don't know. Just--[laughs]. [Shows other memorabilia]. [1--shows drawing] This is what children see as Creative movement. This is a first grader and--aren't I cute. [all laugh].

[00:59:04.02] SHANNON GREEN: Yes, you are.

[00:59:05.04] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I think I'm cute. Those have always been interesting to me--to see how children--wait a minute I'll show you--how children see you. So, look. [2--child's drawing of Schneider]. I think I'm even cute here--I have grey hair now. [3--child's drawing of Schneider]. How about this one? I even wear glasses. Don't you think that one's good? I like that. [00:59:29.24] SHANNON GREEN: I love that you keep those.

[00:59:32.03] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I keep these, and then--well, I love these. [4--2 drawings of Schneider]. And then I create my lessons on these. So my lesson plans have--on the bottom of each of the lesson plans--has one of--some image. It could either be--[5--child's drawing of Schneider]. Oh, this one's good too--look at this one's kind of good. There's one with the masks. A little kid--this was a first grader I think--I'll see if I have a picture. [6] I have some dance pictures that you can't see faces which you can use. The others you can't use right, because they--look at this. This is them when they--this is what they were when they wore their mask--they were an animal. So, this is what animal they were. [unintelligible]. And this is what animal they were when they were dancing. This is like, maybe, second grade--might be wearing this mask. Let me see if it says. St. James--oh, kindergarten. That's what they were--they became an animal.

[01:00:50.13] SHANNON GREEN: So, you have them dance but then you also have them draw their experience?

[01:00:56.04] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Sometimes. Well, and this. [7--Child's drawings of masks]. This was a drawing--very early on--this is at St. Cecilia's--and this was one of my very first schools I ever went to. And I was so amazed because we were sitting in a circle and that's exactly what they captured--the circle.

[laughs]. Anyhow, yes, I keep their drawings, because I use them. [laughs]. That's it, I don't have anything else especially.

[01:01:23.14] SHANNON GREEN: Yeah. Was there anything else that you thought about--reflected on that you wanted to share that we haven't asked you about?

[01:01:30.28] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: No. I just wanted you to know about my virtual vacations. Those were my proudest moments.

[01:01:39.27] SHANNON GREEN: Wonderful.

[01:01:42.27] [Director's comments].

[01:01:56.02] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: [Shows photographs.] [1] That's fine--I'll send--this is me when I was learning to dance at the--I mean, I thought that was kind of--

[01:02:02.23] SHANNON GREEN: Wow!

[01:02:03.23] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Can you see me?

[01:02:04.28] SHANNON GREEN: I don't know, can I? Which one's you?

[01:02:07.23] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: [points at photo]. I'm right here. That's at the Tucson Creative Dance Center.

[01:02:14.12] SHANNON GREEN: Oh, okay, yes.

[01:02:15.08] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Okay, so, I thought that was kind of interesting. And then--but these I know if you can't have children--. [2] Oh, this was an interesting--this was the first time I ever danced in public. This was at Federal Building [Los Angeles, California] and we were doing some kind of a protest. And I remember dancing, "Here I am, Lord"--I remember what it was. And those are our Sisters all there in the front and they're all doing the motions with--they're doing the movements with me, you know, whatever I was doing. But I--was up on that little--like a parapet--just a little railing dancing at the--right down here at the Federal Building. That was one of the first public things--

[01:02:48.21] SHANNON GREEN: I would like to borrow this one if I may?

[01:02:50.24] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Okay. But then, see I have all these dance pictures if you're interested. You can borrow any of these, okay? Let me see what else I have here. [3,4] This was a--oh, this was our Sisters just doing their thing.

[01:03:10.10] SHANNON GREEN: Oh, I love this.

[01:03:11.06] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: They're dead now--those are all dead Sisters. [5] Here I am as a very young person. You can't even--[laughs]. [6] Here's [Sister] Josepha [??]. [unintelligible]. You can, whatever. Let's see what else I've got here. I think that's it. [7] This was just--I know you can't use it--but you asked me about the "Olympics". This was the Olympics. These were the children. And then each child had a game that they were responsible for--

[01:03:52.18] SHANNON GREEN: And then they engaged the seniors in that--

[01:03:54.23] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yeah, and then they--the seniors went. [8] I also do "Get on the Bus" a lot. All right.

[01:04:02.29] [Director's comments].

[01:04:34.27] KELBY THWAITS: You know something interesting, is that one of the most common

resounding threads that young women getting into--to the transition basically from high school--or from college out--has really been that they found the Sisters of St. Joseph were so joyful and had so much fun and were inclusive without judgement--that those were the main--the big "hooks"--which was really kind of--which you articulated at the beginning.

[01:05:04.03] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: What I said.

[01:05:05.15] KELBY THWAITES: That has been the most common, I would say, thread for women getting in at a young age, leaving boyfriends, you know, leaving family, sometimes when family wasn't supportive--that was something that really helped bring them across and you know, through that chasm or through the unknown, I guess you could say--to make that jump--that leap--that--and just totally just change your life. So, it's just interesting to see that that's reiterated in--

[01:05:32.28] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: But I would think today's change--today is so different than--I mean, when I was seventeen, you know what I mean--seventeen just went into the convent. I mean, we were young and stupid, we just did it. It was just like going from high school just keep going.

[01:05:47.20] SHANNON GREEN: It was normal.

[01:05:48.22] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: It was normal, I mean, but today that isn't the case.

[01:05:51.08] SHANNON GREEN: I have to say, even last week we interviewed Sister Kathy Stein and she entered, you know, in the early Seventies. So, even just the difference between people who entered say, in 1965 and 1971--it's a completely different mindset--

[01:06:06.10] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Of course.

[01:06:07.20] SHANNON GREEN: --a completely different practice--

[01:06:08.15] KELBY THWAITES: Just from Vatican II.

[01:06:09.21] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: I entered in '60, so--

[01:06:11.27] SHANNON GREEN: So, it was just kind of the normal flow--several of your classmates would be entering religious life.

[01:06:18.09] SISTER MARY SCHNEIDER: Yeah. Remember that I told you I wanted to have a life. So, I remember that when I was a senior--[unintelligible] wasn't a girl's school, so who are you going to go to the dances with? So, I decided someone invited me to a party--I'm going to this party and I'm going to collect all the names of the boys I can find so that I can go to these dances. And I met one boy. That was it--Mike Burn. And Mike Burn and I were an item for the year and then I entered. I mean, but, that was--I always knew that's what I was going to do. The other part was just, you know, being a kid. Do what you think--do your thing.

[01:06:53.26] [Director's comments].

[01:08:10.01] End of interview.